

## ***Substance Use and Violence/ Delinquency Have Significant Impacts on Academic Achievement Among Middle and High School Students in Washington State***

*...if we are concerned  
about academic  
performance, we must  
address challenges in  
students' learning  
environment –  
particularly substance  
use – as well as  
classroom factors*

*(Brandon & Tran, 2000).*

For more information on Chemical  
Dependency Treatment, contact:  
Department of Social & Health Services  
Division of Alcohol & Substance Abuse  
PO Box 45330  
Olympia, WA 98504  
Phone: (360) 438-8200, or toll-free at  
(877) 301-4557

DASA Website:  
[www1.dshs.wa.gov/dasa](http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/dasa)

### **Level of Peer Substance Use in Middle Schools Has A Substantial Impact on the Academic Performance of Students Across the State**

A recent study of 10,000 Washington State middle school students indicated that students whose peers had near-zero substance use were more likely to have higher academic achievement scores<sup>i</sup> than students in comparable schools whose peers had low levels of substance use (Brandon & Hill, 2002).

- On average, *students whose peers avoided substance use had reading achievement test scores that were 18 points higher than students with low levels of drinking or drug use.* For an average student, 18 points can be the difference between meeting and not meeting the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) standard in reading.
- On average, *students whose peers avoided substance use had math achievement test scores that were 44 points higher than students with low levels of drinking or drug use.* For an average student, 27 points can be the difference between meeting and not meeting the OSPI standard in math. Thus, the difference between no and low substance use by peers accounts for one and a half times the difference between meeting the math standard and not doing so.

### **Groups of High School Students with Low Substance Use and Low Violent/Delinquent Behavior Have Higher Academic Achievement<sup>ii</sup> (Brandon & Tran, 2000)**

- In a study of 71 high schools, groups of students with low levels of substance use scored an average of 33 points higher on math than those with moderate levels of drinking or drug use.
- Groups of high school students with low levels of violent/delinquent behaviors scored 31 points higher on reading than groups with moderate levels of these behaviors.

### **Groups of Middle School Students with Low Substance Use and Low Violence/Delinquent Behavior Have Higher Academic Achievement<sup>iii</sup> (Brandon & Tran, 2000)**

- In a study of 41 middle schools, groups of students with low involvement in substance use and violence/delinquency

*If schools and communities are concerned about improving achievement, they must learn more about the ways in which non-classroom factors impact the broader learning environment. Focusing solely on classroom activities and academic instruction will not result in the achievement gains for which schools must be accountable (Mandell, Hill, Carter, & Brandon, 2002).*

scored an average of 53 points higher on math than those with moderate involvement.

- Groups of middle school students with low involvement in substance use and violence/delinquency scored an average of 24 points higher on reading than those with moderate involvement.
- Groups of middle school students with low involvement in substance use and violence/delinquency scored an average of 53 points higher on writing than those with moderate involvement.

### References

- Brandon, R. N., & Hill, S. L. (2002). *The Impact of Substance Use and Violence/Delinquency on Academic Achievement for Groups of Middle and High School Students in Washington. Summary of a Report by Washington Kids Count Human Services Policy Center.* Seattle, WA: Washington Kids Count Human Services Policy Center, University of Washington.
- Brandon, R. N., & Tran, H. H. (2000). *Impact of Peer Substance Use on Middle School Performance in Washington: Summary.* Seattle, WA: Washington Kids Count, University of Washington, Human Services Policy Center, Evans School of Public Affairs.
- Brandon, R. N., Tran, H., Bence, M., & Lee, I. (2000). *Impact of Peer Substance Use on Middle School Performance in Washington.* Seattle, WA: Washington Kids Count, Human Services Policy Center, Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington.
- Mandell, D. J., Hill, S. L., Carter, L., & Brandon, R. N. (2002). *The Impact of Substance Use and Violence/Delinquency on Academic Achievement for Groups of Middle and High School Students in Washington.* Seattle, WA: Washington Kids Count Human Services Policy Center, Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington.

<sup>i</sup> As measured by scores on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

<sup>ii</sup> As measured by scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)

<sup>iii</sup> As measured by scores on the WASL.